

Religion

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a man by witchcraft, to prevent rain, and to cause the cattle to be barren. — There exist two kinds of sorcerers, the one whose functions are just mentioned, who plays an important and mostly beneficent rôle in public life and the official religion of the community, and another one whose doings are secret and who works for mischief. If this latter is convicted of his evil doings, he may be severely fined, or even sentenced to death. — Besides these the word *jal yag* "man of medicine" is sometimes used; whether this is a synonym to *ajagg*, or whether it designates still a third class of "witch"-, or ordinary "doctor", I do not know.

When possessed by a spirit (or by *Jwok*?) the sorcerers become ecstatic; ECSTASY the same seems to be the case with a newly elected king; here it seems to be the spirit of *Nyikang*, which falls on his follower, vide page 149.

The texts contain many mythological tales and allusions, which may in former times have formed part of the strictly religious belief of the people, but exist now merely as historical traditions, without having any active meaning to the present generation; this domain of their mental life is, however, not sufficiently known as yet to allow a decisive judgment. A reminiscence of sun-service is evident from 55, page 166. The Nile and Sobat are populated by water-people, who in figure are partly like men, partly like crocodiles or fish. They had, in the past, many intercourse with men. — According to some older writers the spirits of the Nile are worshipped. They have their own cattle-herds, which live with them in and on the banks of the Nile. They often dive up from the water, chiefly in misty weather. When a cow is fished out of the river, it is placed under the protection of the Nile-spirits and the sun-god¹.

The Shilluks have two expressions which may be translated by "soul" or "spirit" of a living person: *wei* and *tipt*; *wei* means "breath", and is the life-giving factor in man; the meaning of *tipt* is "shadow" of a man, or "image", as seen when looking into clear, still water. — The spirit of a dead person is called *angkt*; the word is derived from *agg* to kill; *angkt* probably means "one who kills", or "who is killed". The *angkt* is feared.

On the abode of deceased persons the Shilluks have but vague ideas; in one of the texts the dead are called "the people of the village of God", *jū pā jūpt*. Whether they have a general belief in a life after death, is not known.

Islam does up to now not find much sympathy with the Shilluks. They prefer their own religion to that of foreigners. Only a few people who have for a longer time lived in close touch with Mohammedans, chiefly those who have served as soldiers, adopt the religion of Mohammed, or at least wear Mohammedan amulets beside their own charms. It is admirable that these people, Shilluks, Dinkas Anywaks, and Nuers, though having lived for centuries side

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[754]

ECSTASY 781

MYTHOLOGY 773

SOUL, SPIRIT 774

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¹ This doubtlessly relates to the cows of *Nyikang*, vide the preceding.

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by side with Arabs and other Mohammedan people, should have preserved their own heathen form of worship, and should, with a few exceptions, look down rather with contempt on the religion of the foreigners. Partly this is explained by their conservativeness and self-confidence, and partly by the fact that their intercourse with Mohammedans was almost exclusively hostile. Whether now that the Pax Britannica makes slave-dealing and raiding impossible and new ideas slowly penetrate the country, Islam will make greater progress, the future will show. A gradual peaceful conquest of the country by Islam is not improbable, because civilisation, as it comes to these people, wears an outspoken Islamic stamp.

On Christian Mission work among the Shilluks vide the end of Introduction.

V. POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS.

643 RESIDENCE
OF THE KING

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The Shilluks are the only people of the Sudan who have a Kingdom¹. The king resides at Fashoda. His residence consists in a large number of huts for himself, his numerous wives and other members of his family and for guests. He possesses large herds of cattle, goats and sheep. When a person of some respect pays him a visit, the king presents him with an ox. — The royal robe consists in a leopard skin. They have also a coronation robe of leopard skin and ostrich feathers, which has been handed down from many generations. The present king has a gorgeous red robe presented by the governor, which he wears on occasions when he meets the higher English officials.

ELECTION

The kingdom of the Shilluks is hereditary in so far as the king must always be a member of the royal family, that is, of the descendants of Nyikang, and only a person whose father has been a king, may be elected. There are three houses of the royal family, and the king is elected from each of these royal branches in turn. If there are several brothers in the branch whose turn it is to have the kingship, upon the death of the king one of these brothers will be elected. But in case there is no vacancy during the life of these three brothers, then the sons of the eldest will be in line for the throne.

Fadyet is the present king. He is of the house of Kwat Ker. When he dies, the kingship will pass to the house of *Yā*; at the death of the king from the house of *Yā* it will be the turn of the house of *Nāqek*. Thence it will return to the house of Kwat Ker, but not to a son of *Fadyet*, but to one of the king's brothers. When it has gone around the circle again, it will be the turn of a son of *Fadyet*. There seem to be two branches of each house, so that when a king dies, it will be the turn of his eldest son to become king, after five kings have reigned and died. There have been other royal houses, but they have lost their

¹ "king" is in Shilluk *riḡ* or *ryḡ*; in older literature the word "bondu" is given as the Shilluk name for king. By Europeans the king is commonly called *mek*, which is a contraction of the Arab *malik*.

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648EXPEDITION
OF THE
ABYSSINIANS
1898LATEST
EVENTS

In summer 1898 an Abyssinian force came down the Sobat. It arrived at Sobat mouth at the end of June, but, owing to the death of the leader, the expedition returned almost immediately, without having a hostile encounter with the Shilluks.

In April, 1903, the Shilluk king Kur Wat Nyedok (*Negok*) was deposed for malpractices; his successor, Fadyet Wat Kwat Ker (*Ker*), is now limited in power, and is subservient in most things to the Governor of the Upper Nile Province, a British officer resident in the town of Kodok (Fashoda). Gradually the whole Shilluk population was now brought under the more direct control of the Anglo Egyptian Government. The election of their king is now subject to the approval of the Governor General.

CHRISTIAN MISSIONS IN THE EGYPTIAN SUDAN.

BY CHARLES R. WATSON, PHILADELPHIA.

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The "American Mission" of the United Presbyterian Church of North America and the Church Missionary Society of Great Britain are the two missionary agencies representing Protestant Christendom in the Egyptian Sudan. Both Missions began their work after the opening up of the Sudan through Kitchener's victory over the Mahdi forces at Omdurman: the Church Missionary Society in 1899 and the American Mission in 1900. In Northern Sudan they labor alongside of each other in a spirit of comity and cooperation, each developing such missionary work as the other may not have taken up at each station occupied by both societies.

The stations occupied by the American Mission in Northern Sudan and the forces and work maintained at these stations in 1911 were as follows:

Khartum: An ordained American missionary; a native ordained native pastor; an organized native congregation with 142 members; a boys' school with an enrolment of 210; regular congregational services; a clinic; a boys' orphanage or home.

Khartum North: Two unmarried American women missionaries and an American doctor; a girls' boarding school with an enrolment of 133 in both day and boarding departments; a boys' day school with an enrolment of 143; a clinic; regular preaching services.

Omdurman: An ordained American missionary; a boys' school with an enrolment of 80; regular preaching services.

Wad Medani: A colporteur evangelist with regular preaching services; a mixed school with an enrolment of 8 boys and 12 girls.

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Atbara: A boys' school with an enrolment of 87; also informal services.

Wadi Halfa: A girls' school just opened, and informal services.

Port Sudan, Merowe, Suakin and Dueim: There are native Evangelical Church members at these centers, and informal services are held at the first three places.

The stations occupied by the Church Missionary Society in Northern Sudan and the forces and work maintained at these stations in 1911 were as follows:

Khartum: One unmarried English missionary; four native Christian women workers; a girls' school with an enrolment of 68.

Omdurman: A medical English missionary; two unmarried English women missionaries; three native Christian women workers; a girls' school with an enrolment of 51; a hospital and a clinic.

Atbara: An unmarried English woman missionary; two native Christian women workers; a girls' school with an enrolment of 38.

In Southern Sudan, among the pagan tribes, each Mission labors in a distinct territory. The American Mission's sphere of work and influence lies along the Sobat River; that of the Church Missionary Society lies along the upper reaches of the White Nile.

The American Mission opened work at Doleib Hill, in 1902 on the Sobat River just six miles from where this river empties into the White Nile. The American force here consists of two industrial missionaries, an ordained missionary and a doctor. A regular Sabbath morning service is held, and those engaged in industrial work, ranging in number from ten to two hundred, attend daily morning service. Evangelistic itinerating is done in adjoining villages. A boys' school has been maintained but with some irregularity. Some 3600 clinic patients have been treated. Agricultural and industrial training forms the chief feature of the Mission's work. The population of this region is from the Shilluk tribe, but Dinka and Nuers are also reached. The Mission is about to open another station farther up the Sobat River in the vicinity of Nasseer, and a doctor and an evangelistic missionary have been appointed to this task.

The Church Missionary Society began its work at Malek, on the White Nile, about 1000 miles south of Khartum, in 1908. The British missionary force consists of two ordained men, a lay worker, and a doctor. The work is chiefly among the Thain, Bor and inland Dinkas.

The following sketch of the early missionary efforts of the American Mission will be of interest. In 1899, the Rev. Andrew Watson, D. D., and the Rev. J. K. Giffen, D. D., were commissioned to visit the Egyptian Sudan and investigate the possibilities for missionary work. This missionary reconnaissance resulted in a recommendation that the American Mission, whose work in Egypt

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797 extended from Alexandria to Assuan and whose Evangelical Church members and adherents were going into the Sudan in considerable numbers as Government employes, should extend its work to the Sudan. Accordingly, the Rev. J. H. Giffen, D. D., and Dr. H. T. McLaughlin were commissioned as the first missionaries of the proposed Mission. They reached Omdurman in December, 1900. For some time, a rigorous prohibition of the Government forbade all missionary work among the Moslems of Northern Sudan. The work was therefore limited to the Evangelical and other Christian communities. In March, 1902, work was begun at Doleib Hill, among the black tribes of Southern Sudan. In establishing this mission station practically everything remained to be done. Houses needed to be provided; at first of mud, later of burnt brick, and later still of concrete. Provisions needed to be secured and gardening became a necessity, for no vegetables or fruit were to be had unless grown by the missionaries themselves. Problems of health became acute, as life and work were thus undertaken in a region and a climate where hitherto no white community had established itself. To these difficulties were added those of safety from wild animals, and especially innumerable snakes which infested the place until the land was somewhat cleared by agriculture. There were also the problems of establishing just and sympathetic relations with the people of the neighborhood. The early attitude of suspicion which prevailed is well illustrated by the following incident narrated by the Rev. Dr. Giffen in his interesting book "The Egyptian Sudan."

648 "We had been there for some months, and thought we had gained much confidence from the people. We had a friend visiting us and this chief, Ariu, had called in honor of our guest. After some conversation, our friend said to Ariu: 'Now you have a good and righteous Government; it will protect you, and will help you; it will fight your battles if need be. And these missionaries will teach your children, will help you to cultivate your lands, will find a market for your grain, and they have The Book and will teach you of God; you ought now to be quiet and peaceable. Till your lands and care for your herds.'

"After a good deal of deliberation and smoking, Ariu laid his pipe aside and replied: 'Master, you speak well. We had here the Turks (the old Egyptian Government) and they said, "Be submissive to us; we will protect you, we will fight your battles for you, we will teach you of God." But they took our cattle, they destroyed our villages, and carried our women and children into slavery, and they are gone. Then came the Ansar (the Mahdists) and they said: "Come with us, we have a great army; we will care for you and protect you; we will give you plenty to eat, and a good place to live; we have The Book and we will teach you of God". But they slew our men, and right here

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where these missionaries built their houses many of our men fell fighting for their women and children. They took away our cattle, destroyed our villages, carried off our women and children, and they too have gone. Now you come and say: "We will care for you; we will protect you; we will fight for you; we have *The Book*; we will teach you." Master, you speak well; but we will see.⁷⁹⁷
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"This brief, pathetic story, a review of their whole history, reveals everything."

The supreme problem in the new work was, however, the language, for the Shilluk language had never been reduced to writing, neither was any grammar of the language in existence. The missionaries sent to the Southern Sudan mission field labored successively to reduce the language to writing and to work out its grammar and vocabulary, but they were greatly hampered both by the burden of other work and by an entire lack of acquaintance with cognate African languages. However, the Rev. Ralph Carson and the Rev. Elbert McCreery especially were able to bring together considerable material bearing upon the structure and vocabulary of the Shilluk language, but it remained for the efforts with which this book is connected to set forth with adequate definiteness the grammatical structure of the language. These efforts became possible through a generous grant made by the Trustees of the Arthington Fund, to the Board of Foreign Missions of the United Presbyterian Church of North America under whose care the American Mission in the Sudan is operated.⁷⁹⁷

Among the successes of missionary work during the brief period of about a decade which has elapsed since this work was begun, may be enumerated the following important achievements: the ministry to the religious life of many Christians, Egyptians, Levantines and Europeans who entered the Sudan in Government service; the establishment of preaching centers and of both educational and medical missionary institutions whose Christian influence is steady and far-reaching; the solution of problems of health, of residence and of agricultural possibilities; the solid foundations laid for the mastery of the language; the winning of the sympathy of the people; and, finally, a hopeful beginning in the winning of some to Christianity and in the awakening of a spirit of inquiry in a much larger circle.

The most serious problem is the rapid advance of Islam into pagan territory through the aggressive efforts of Moslem traders and the pervasive influence of military posts at which are stationed Moslem troops.

233 Tribal custom forbids the Shulla from riding upon a donkey, so he never
[492] possesses one. Cattle are never used for draught or carrying purposes, so he has no beasts of burden, and perhaps never will so long as women are plentiful.

231 The villages are full of hunting dogs. Unlike the Nuers and most of the
[262] Dinkas the Shulla raise chickens. They are a degenerate Mediterranean strain. Eggs are eaten only by women and children.

Animal life must be well guarded and carefully housed at night most of the year. If an animal loiters on the river bank it most likely becomes the food of a crocodile. If one strays off into the woods it probably becomes the prey of a hyena, leopard or lion. Myriads of flies and numerous varieties of ticks also prey upon the flocks and herds, tormenting them by night as well as by day, and transmit the germs of various diseases also. Texas or tick fever is nearly always present, and a trypanosome not so fatal as the one of dreaded tsetse fly is also prevalent. The plague is a frequent visitor too and the mouth and foot diseases often attack the cattle toward the close of the dry season. The annual loss from all these enemies of animal life is very heavy, but as no females, unless barren, are ever killed for food or sold, and grass is plentiful, on the whole there is an increase in the number of live stock raised.

241 As to the possibilities of agriculture in the Shulla land obstacles to be over-
[797] come have been mentioned. What the mission has done shows that many
1777 varieties of fruits and a considerable number of vegetables may be grown. Future generations may have lumber, if the right varieties of forest trees are planted. Cotton is not a sure rain crop, but with irrigation it has few enemies. Sugar-cane and rice can be grown in favorable places. The soil of this part of the Sudan is not generally deep, is deficient in nitrogen and very poor in humus. Nitrogen may be restored with legumes, but the humus problem is difficult, for the white ants devour very quickly all manure, mulch etc. spread upon the ground.

243 The Shulla in sticking to the one main crop of dura has after all adopted the grain which is naturally adapted to the soil and climate and yields best to his methods of farming.

5. Foods and food-stuffs.

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kwfn a kind of dura-bread or mush.

dklê a food of dura.

apêlê a food of dura.

arêyê a food of dura (prepared after Arab fashion).

addêlê a food of dura (prepared after Arab fashion).

ngiandr a food of dura with fat, eaten without anything else.

ngêlêlêlê a common dura-food.

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Other body marks are also made at will and have no religious significance. The people say that it is nice to have these marks on the body, especially for young men and women and for dancing festivals. These marks take many forms - scorpions, tigers, geometrical designs, or even military signs, especially that of a sergeant on the upper arm.

Clothes.

Hofmayer states that "... So gross die Aufmerksamkeit und Vorliebe für Putz und Schmuck, so gering die Sorge für die Kleider." (18) He also writes: "Während der Mann in Shilluklande fast immer ohne Kleidung ging, stand es mit dem Weibe in dieser Hinsicht anders." (19) and "Langsam beginnen nun auch unter diesem Volke, seitdem christliche Kultur und Religion ins Land gezogen ist, Anzeichen einer besseren Zeit sich einzustellen. Bereits kann man die Nacktheit der Shilluk von diesem Lande als verschunden betrachten." (20) During my sojourn among the Shilluk I noticed one great difference among the Shilluk and the other Nilotic tribes, this being that the Shilluk were always dressed - at towns as well as in their own villages, children being the only exception - and others were not. Their dress is called in their own tongue LAUO, and consists of a piece of cloth of any colour, but mainly white. The LAUO is placed round the body, so that it reaches down to the knees and is knotted in a special way on the left shoulder by men (21) and the right shoulder by women. Women also wear some other underclothing which is well described by Hofmayer. (22) But the question is that the LAUO is a standard Shilluk dress; it is neither European nor Arabic from the northern Sudan. It stands unique and the Nuor or the Dinka, who are supposed to have some kinship with the Shilluk, go, men and women, quite naked. Hofmayer's statement, as quoted above, was written in 1925. It is quite impossible that the Shilluk have altered one of the most important habits over a period of 30 or 50 years, taking into account the extremely conservative spirit which all authors attribute to the Shilluk and other Nilotes. Secondly, if the Shilluk men began to dress due to the introduction of Christian culture and religion, they would have adopted the European dress, (23) rather than invent a new type of dress foreign to both missionaries and Moslems. Or, if this were due to Christian culture, why did it not produce the same effect among the Dinka and Nuor, among whom comparatively more missionary work has been done than among the Shilluk? Hofmayer contradicts himself in the same book. Cal, the second Shilluk king, who lived about 1580 A.D., before he died, washed himself, and "Nach vollendeter Waschung kleidete Cal sich an." (24). This means that the Shilluk used to dress themselves from the beginning of their known history.

I have also no knowledge of a society in which the differences between the two sexes go, or went, as far as that which we could understand from Hofmayer's description, i.e. men go naked while women have a complicated dress system composed of two pieces for the unmarried and of three pieces for the married.

There is also a traditional ceremony of importance in the Shilluk political organisation. Every new chief of a settlement, which is a combined group of line-go hamlets, has to be confirmed in his post by the king. This takes the form of investing the new chief with a LAUO with the king "personally knotting this robe over the jago's (chief) shoulder" (25). In a similar manner, the chief of a hamlet (a line-go group, homesteads in a settlement) may be invested with a LAUO "directly from the king, or from the settlement" may be

[18] "such great attention and predilection for dress and ornamentation, so little care for the children."

[19] "While the men in Shilluk country almost always went without clothing, the women behaved differently in this respect."

[20] Slowly in the beginning, but since that time Christian culture and religion has also penetrated among these people, a sign that a better time is coming. Already one can see that the nakedness of the Shilluk is disappearing from this country."

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- 291 invested with a LAUC, "directly from the king, or from the settlement chief."
 621 (26) This ceremony shows clearly that the LAUC plays a symbolic role in the
 643 Shilluk political institutions. (27) These institutions are more or less matters
 of tradition, and traditions are rarely changed in a conservative society.

291 I have dwelt at length upon this problem, not only to criticize
 Hofmayer, but mainly to direct attention to one of the most important cultural
 characteristics of the Shilluks, in comparison with other Nilotic groups, and
 to show that this is not a newly acquired custom, but has deep roots in the past
 that can be explained by cultural contact or diffusion that affected only the
 Shilluk.

Notes.

- 113 (1) Seligman, C.G. & B. Z. f Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan, London 1932
 P. 40
- 163 (2) Hofmayer, W., Die Shilluk, Mon 1925, p 247.
 (3) The word means the "meeting-place of the people".
 (4) Tothill, J.D., Agriculture in the Sudan, London 1948, p.815
 (5) Ibid, pp. 820/821
 (6) Ibid, p. 812
 (7) Seligman, B. Notes and Queries in Anthropology, London.
 (8) " C.G., Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan, London 1932, p 13
 (9) Hofmayer W., Die Shilluk, Mon 1925, p 19
 (10) Seligman, C.G., Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, No 11
 London 1910, pp. 516/517
 The figures in brackets indicate the number of persons measured.
 (11) Seligman, C.G., Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan, London 1932, p. 418
 (12) see above, Table "C" No A 4, and A 1, have three lines.
 (13) Butt A., 1952, p 28
 (14) see above, table "n"
 (15) see above, table "C", card No B 3, he was the son of king Yor, who adopted
 the name of Omar, and converted to Islam.
 (16) Seligman C.G., Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan, London 1932, p 49
 (17) Butt, A., 1952, p 28
 (18) Hofmayer, W., Die Shilluk, Mon 1925, p 344
 (19) Ibid, p. 345
 (20) Ibid, p. 345
- 114 (21) This may be explained by the wish to let the right arm always free to throw
 spears or anything else. Also Seligman (1932, p 43) erred when he said that
 " the inhabitants of a village, Pathour, mark a scorpion several inches in
 length... on the shoulder - left for men and right for women- so that it is
 not hidden by the shoulder cloth."
- 179 (22) Hofmayer, W., 1925, p 345/346
 (23) This is the case I have observed; the Shilluk who comes under the influence
 of missions or who was converted to Christianity wears European shirts and
 shirts, and the Shilluk who was converted to Islam wears the usual Arab white
 dress, with a turban.
 (24) Hofmayer, W., 1925, p 39
 (25) Butt, A., The Nilotes of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan and Uganda, London 1925,
 p. 30
 (26) Ibid, p 30
 171 (27) There is a similar ceremony among the Fung of investing the new chiefs with
 a head dress.

BAAI FJS
Acholi FK4
Lotuko AJ17

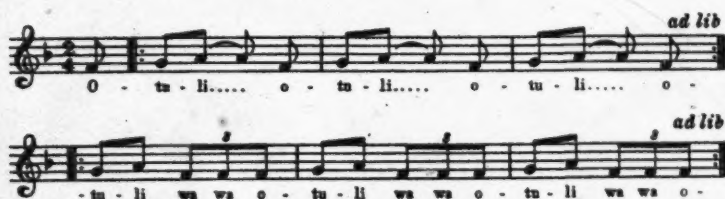
AZANDE F07

A. N. TUCKER.—*Children's Games and Songs in the Southern Sudan.*

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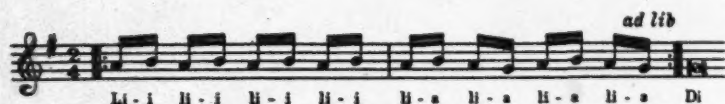
This game is definitely a hit at the white man. The "chin of a goat" in the first song refers to the beards of the R.C. missionaries (beards being considered unseemly among the Nilotic tribes); while the kicking in the second song is thought to be a skit on the average official's use of his boots when angry or impatient.

19. *Holding one's Breath.*—A much more popular line game among all tribes is that of holding one's breath for a certain period. The Shilluk play it as follows. The boys line up in two ranks as if for "Nuts and May." One boy on one side places the tips of the fingers of one hand on top of his head, takes a deep breath, and proceeds to walk briskly round the other line of boys and back to his own place, chanting in step:—



without drawing breath until he gets back. If he chokes or his voice catches, the rest chase after him and pinch his arms. The boys go out alternately from each side in turn, but one boy need not wait till his neighbour is in before setting out himself. If too many boys get back safely, the lines withdraw till a greater distance separates them.

Not all tribes sing for this game. The Bari and Latuko merely march round humming on one note and pinching their noses at intervals. The Acholi sing the following song:—



the "Di . . ." being protracted until the boy is back in his place.

IMITATIONS OF ANIMALS, ETC.

Though really coming under a different category, the following few games are included here by virtue of their songs:—

20. *Bush-buck in a Trap.* (See Figs. 5 and 6, Pl. XVI.) This game is played by the Azande, and its success depends entirely on how the principal player can imitate the animal's movements. The boys stand in a ring, holding hands. One boy is in the middle, and he is "Gbodi,"

S
524
533
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747
609
302S
524S
533
539B
524
Ac
524
533
539Az
524



FIG. 1.—SHILLUK VERSION OF "HUNT THE SLIPPER."



FIG. 2.—BARI VERSION OF "HUNT THE SLIPPER."



FIG. 3.—"NYIKANG WAS ABOUT TO SEIZE HIS BOAT" (SHILLUK).



FIG. 4.—"HERE ARE TWO CLUBS" (SHILLUK).



FIG. 5.—"NDEKE WAI NDEKE" (BARI).



FIG. 6.—"NYAM NYAM NYAM. DE DE."

CHILDREN'S GAMES AND SONGS IN THE SOUTHERN SUDAN.



FIG. 1.—SHILLUK PLAYING "LION AND SHEEP."



FIG. 2.—DINKA PLAYING "LION AND SHEEP."



FIG. 3.—"SIX ROGES" AMONG THE AZANDE.



FIG. 4.—"THE FOREMAN COMES WHIRLING" (SHILLUK).



FIG. 5.—"GHOSH SHAKE YOUR HEAD" (AZANDE).



FIG. 6.—"GHOSH CROUCH DOWN" (AZANDE).

CHILDREN'S GAMES AND SONGS IN THE SOUTHERN SUDAN.

[P. 167 (A)]

A
L
J
S
291
524
747
516



FIG. 1.—SARDE "SHAKE."



FIG. 2.—LATENO "GIRAFFE."



FIG. 3.—JUA "FROG."



FIG. 4.—SHILUK "MOOPE."



FIG. 5.—SHILUK "CASOR."

CHILDREN'S GAMES AND SONGS IN THE SOUTHERN SUDAN.

[p. 187 (d)]

OBSERVATIONS ON THE SHILLUK OF THE UPPER NILE

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further evidence, that such offences were treated as private delicts in the past, though nowadays, through the influence of the Government, penal sanctions may be applied.

Witchcraft

The Dinka and Nuer tell us that witches and other anti-social persons were sometimes dispatched by their victims or their kinsmen with the tacit consent of the community. Acts of homicide against persons whose actions threatened the integrity of the community were either not subject to restitutory sanctions at all, or the compensation demanded by their kinsmen was on a much reduced scale.¹ A similar attitude towards witches is to be found among the Shilluk, but again without the support of actual examples.

In the published literature there are references to persons described variously as witches, sorcerers, magicians, medicine-men, and possessors of the evil eye,² and their activities and methods are described, but there are few references to the way in which they were treated. The sanction applied to witchcraft is normally counter-magic consciously applied by the victim.

Hofmayr speaks of 'the *jal jat*, the evil-doer, his aim in life is to do harm, both to life and to property, either by natural means or others,' and adds that 'the *jal jat* works in the dark, but if he is caught, he will be severely punished. (Often he is handed over to the people who kill him.' Hofmayr also speaks of the 'poison mixer' (again *jal jat*) who 'is hardly ever discovered. If he is caught, the people will lynch him on the spot and his relations will have to leave the district.'³ Another passage mentions that the compensation for killing a person possessing the evil eye is only four head of cattle instead of ten. These references, supported by what the Shilluk have told me, suggest an attitude similar to that found among the Nuer and Dinka.

It might be expected that, if there were any greater development of concepts of public law, and if the *reth* performed formal judicial and executive functions, acts of this sort would be subject not to merely private retaliation with the consent of the community, but rather to repressive sanctions applied by the *reth* or his representatives. In fact there is no evidence of this. It may be noted in this connexion that there are instances recorded during the last thirty years of attempts to introduce alien cults which would clearly be subversive of the ritual status of the *reth* and, through him, of the religious foundations of Shilluk society. For this reason Shilluk who have openly practised the Dinka cult of Deng have been severely repressed.⁴ There is good reason to believe that such activities would have been punished by death in the past and they are, by their very nature, public delicts amounting to acts of treason.

CONCLUSIONS

Much of the evidence so far quoted is unreliable, mainly because the authors have recorded impressions rather than facts. My own conversations with the Shilluk on the subject have been limited and perfunctory, and for this reason cannot provide

¹ For example, the Nuer *maib* or Ghoul - see Howell and Lewis, 'Nuer Ghoul - a form of Witchcraft', *J.N.R.* xxviii, 1947.

² *girop*, *magician*, *jal jat*, *owone*, *jab*, *possessor of the evil eye*. There are many references to the

activities of such persons in Hofmayr, *The Shilluk*. See also Opler, D. S., 'The Evil Medicine Man', *J.N.R.*, 1920.

³ Hofmayr, *op. cit.*
⁴ See Willis, C. A., 'The Cult of Deng', *J.N.R.*, vol. 21, p. 191.

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"Shilluks were pagans. They were seen afterwards converted to Islam for the sake of trading with Cairo and took the name of Fung, which they interpret sometimes lords or conquerors, and at other times free citizens". 3)

In another statement Bruce hits upon an important aspect of the inner organization of the state:

"It is one of the singularities which obtains among this brutish people, that the king ascends his throne under the admission that he may be lawfully put to death by his own subjects or slaves upon a council being held by the great officers, if they decree that it is not for the advantage of the State that he be suffered to reign any longer. There is one officer of his own family who alone can be the instrument of shedding his sovereign and kinsman's blood. This officer is called Sid el Coom, master of the king's household or servants, but has no vote in deposing him; nor is any guilt imputed to him however many of his sovereigns he thus murdered. Asmet Sid el Coom, the present regicide, and resident in Ismail's palace seemed, by a strange accident, to be one of the gentlest spirits of any at Sennar. His place of birth was a village of Fasugie, and it appeared to me that he was still a pagan". 4)

That was the first time the world ever heard of the name Shilluk, and thus was the beginning of the problem, which is now more than one and a half centuries old. Many authors have supported this opinion of the Shilluk origin of the Fung kingdom, and many as well objected, producing speculations and theories. Others changed their opinions on second thoughts, and until now new handling of the subject and the introduction of new ideas concerning this tangible problem are still forthcoming; but we can summarize these controversies into three major lines:

- 1) The Shilluk origin of the Fung. 5)
- 2) The Arab origin of the Fung - or generally the Eastern origin. 6)
- 3) The Western origin of the Fung, i.e. Darfur or other western Islamic empires of the vast Sudan. 7)

What concerns us in this paper is the first item; that is, broadly speaking, the relations between the Fungs and the Shilluk, while the origin of the Fung themselves is more or less a historical subject.

- 2) Bellagum, p. 424. (As there is in Vienna but a French translation of Bruce, I preferred to quote him, whenever it was possible, in English from any other book).
- 3) Bellagum, p. 424.
- 4) Bruce, Arkell, Westermann, (and Crawford to a certain extent). The Fung Chronicles, Arab, Senegally, and Jackson are for the Arab origin, Chateaux and Walder are for an eastern origin, i.e. the Fung were sent by Abyssinia to restore order after the fall of Christian Nobe.
- 5) Trummer, and later on Arkell.

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[644]

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UPPER NILE PROVINCE.

THE SHILLUK PEACE CEREMONY.

628 This district had been disturbed by a feud for more than three years. The people of the district were tired of the continual guerilla warfare, and some of them were anxious to have the trouble finally settled, and to return to normal conditions. Each side was afraid to make the suggestion lest it appear to be weak.

628 After an outbreak the mamur and the king or mek advised the chief
634 men of the district to get together and make peace. The chief of the
643 district came to the mission and asked to have their conference of the
[197] chief men here. Since the feud the chief of the district had been
able to exercise his authority over one faction only. The Mainam,
friction, which included Mainam, Fakol and Fatwara recognized him,
but the people of Failo refused to accept him as chief. However
the old men of Failo answered his call, and after several conferences
both sides agreed that they desired to end the feud. They decided to
inform the government and the king of their decision, and that peace,
would be established, when it suited the government to send a re-
presentative with the king.

The king came to the mission as being neutral ground where both sides could come. He had two days to work before the arrival of the inspector. He needed only a few hours. The old men of both factions presented themselves before him. He said "You are the chief men. How is the talk?" They replied that it was finished. Akol, the chief of the district, then said it was his desire to rule the district well, but that he needed the help of the king, and the government to unite it. The king then dismissed the old men, and told them the talk was finished. He warned them to bring their fighting men to have the final ceremony as soon as the inspector arrived.

628 The Senior Inspector of the province, Mr. Jackson, arrived in the
634 night. Chief Akol, heard the boat pass his village, and he was so
[648] anxious for the peace, that he ran to the mission to make sure it was
the province boat. When he had found it was the boat belonging to
the inspector he ran back to call his men. He told the people he was

INSTALLATION OF A RETH

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a wish to be buried at once, as his father *reth* Yor had been buried at 766
once after being executed by the Dervishes.

The grave of a *reth*, and of all *Awereth*, is a shaft dug in the ground with a cavity cut in the bottom of one side to form a vault. After the body is placed in the vault, it is shut off with stakes and the shaft filled up with earth.

Some few days before he died the *reth* was baptised a Christian. [117] ●
It is possible that his conversion affected the ceremonial connected [177]
with his death; the absence of his many wives from the ceremonies,
and his request to be buried at once and not in accordance with tradi-
tional custom suggest this.

The *reth* is looked upon by the Shilluk as responsible for their 643
prosperity, and his strength in their eyes causes the Shilluk, their crops
and their herds, and the fish and hippopotamus in their river to increase.
In times of famine or cattle plague, at once the Shilluk begin to feel
that the *reth* is losing his powers. For two years prior to 1943 the [731]
Shilluk crops had been very poor. In 1942-43 the crops were worse
than ever, and wholesale deaths from famine were only averted by
large scale grain imports by the government. After the previous
famine, which lasted for three years ending in 1935, the *reth* had be-
come seriously ill. This time he was an old man, and knowing his
responsibilities to the Shilluk, and feeling his physical powers failing
owing to his illness, he doubtless lost the will to live, and wanted to
die. Whether he was ceremonially strangled, as is traditional for
*reth*s and all the *Awereth*, we do not know, and cannot find out. We
incline to the view that, as his death became certain, and he and his
family held no further hope of recovery, he was smothered. It would
have been unseemly to have held a post-mortem, and other inform-
ation is not available. It might be put in this way; it is possible
that he was "assisted" to die.

After his initial election the new *reth* was soon busy thinking about 643
the waks for Fafiti Yor. Shilluk opinion seemed to think it would
not be held for a year after his death, and that the tribal installation 766

29: Dempsey

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FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

[For information on missionary activities and a brief history of the mission among the Shilluk see category 116, pp. 99-142.]

CHAPTER I

WHERE IS KODOK?

I REMEMBER once reading a book, *Cavalcade* I think it was 797
called, the first chapter of which described the return 123
from the South African War of the Civic Imperial Volunteers. In it one of the victorious heroes was asked by his admiring wife, "Where is Africa, Alf?", but alas, Alf didn't know. My ignorance, I fear, was similar to that of Alf when in 1939 I received an appointment to work in the Apostolic Prefecture of Kodok. Almost all that I knew of Kodok was that it was in the Sudan, and therefore somewhere in Africa; to that extent, at least, my knowledge was superior to Alf's. I did know where Africa was, but apart from that the name Kodok was just a palindrome, for it was the last and least of our missions, having been entrusted to the care of the Mill Hill Fathers only in the previous year, and the first band of five priests with Monsignor J. A. Wall at their head had but recently taken possession of the new field.

It was in December, 1939, that four of us set out to augment the original band of five, sailing in a wartime convoy for Africa. By this time I had learned a little more about the place. I knew, for instance, that it was the same place as 797
Fashoda, famous in history as the meeting-place of Kitchener and Marchand and the scene of the 'incident' which nearly brought about war between France and England; that it was situated on the River Nile, 450 miles or so south of [131]
Khartoum; that it gave its name to an Apostolic Prefecture which theoretically covered a territory more than twice the size of Ireland, but in practice was confined to the land of the tribes dwelling on the river banks; that in the Prefecture there were already four mission stations established at Detwok, Lul, Tonga and Yoynyang by the Verona Fathers,

• 797 our predecessors in the field; that really Kodok had very little to do with the Prefecture, being merely a village with a convenient name about ten miles from Detwok, from which it was administered.

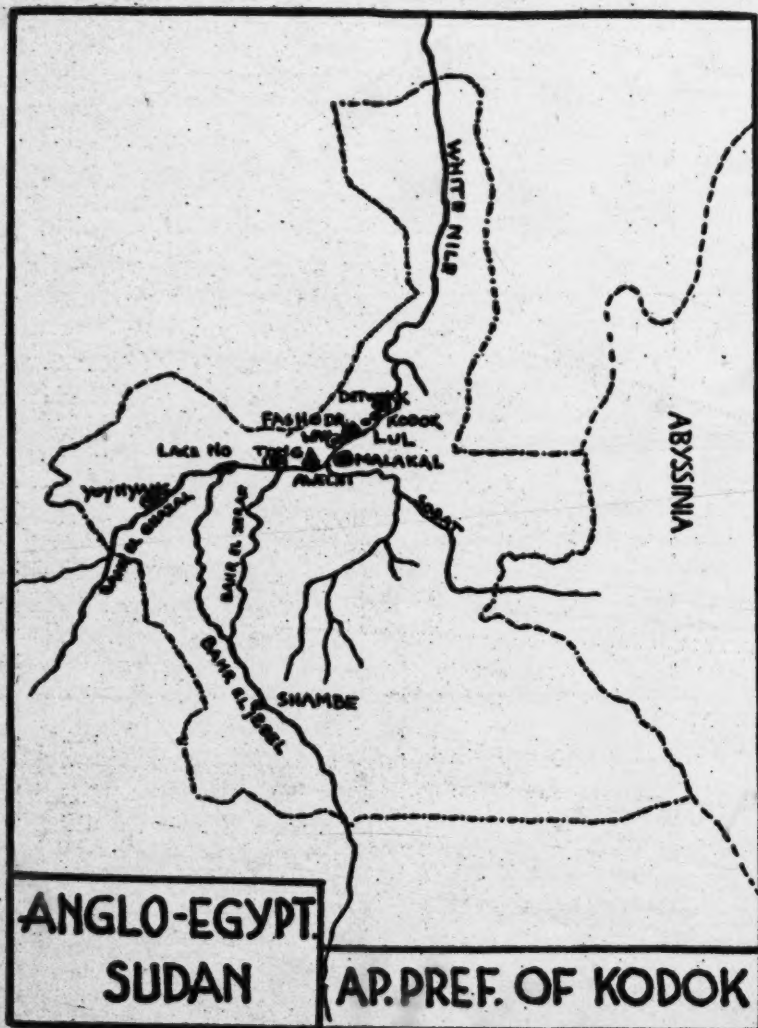
000 The journey out provided few outstanding incidents to record. The blowing up of a trawler which struck a magnetic mine in the English Channel; the sight of the destroyers keeping station on the flanks of the convoy and the daily visit of Coastal Command aircraft; the halt under the great guns of Gibraltar, where the convoy dispersed; the loveliness of Valetta in Malta, and its great heat; the Midnight Mass at Christmas celebrated deep down inside the ship for the benefit of the Goanese stewards, and the indescribable discord of their singing; the surprising coldness of the Suez Canal at night; our feeling of forlornness when at last we stood on the quay at Port Sudan and watched the ship steaming out of the harbour; our dismay when we realized that our baggage had not been landed from the hold and was being carried on to Mombasa; these are the simple recollections that remain of an uneventful voyage. From Port Sudan we travelled by rail 500 miles through the desert to Khartoum. At each station along the route there was a lengthy halt while hordes of Sudanese, men, women and children, clamoured around the carriage windows, some offering for sale scraggy-looking chickens and doubtfully fresh eggs, others merely holding out grimy hands for alms and chanting the familiar Sudanese cry, 'Baksheesh, baksheesh'. At Atbara a lone Italian priest met the train, a Verona Father, one who keeps the Sanctuary lamp alight in the desert. He is always informed from Port Sudan or from Khartoum when a priest is passing through so that he can have an opportunity of making his confession. On this occasion, however, he was bidding farewell to one of his brethren from Khartoum whose company he had enjoyed for a few days and who now joined us on the train on his way home. In Khartoum we stayed for a short while as guests with the Verona Fathers and then set out on the last lap of our travels, the 500-mile journey up the Nile.

000 second- and third-class passengers and cargo, and around and behind were more cargo barges. Thus burdened, the *Rejaf*, travelling by night as well as by day, plodded along the river at a steady five miles an hour. A blast from its steam whistle signalled our approach to a trading station, and immediately all was bustle and excitement on the river bank. Merchants from the interior were there in force bringing in trucks, or loaded on camels and donkeys, quantities of produce for shipment, mostly grain. Humbler folk were there too, carrying the inevitable chickens and eggs, or perhaps dragging a protesting sheep or goat for sale to the crew. The whole bank was a mass of vociferous hagglers and squalling children, and if it were daytime, the water's edge would be lined with women washing clothes, the owners of which would be taking a dip in the river the while. Thanks to the hot sun and the stiff breeze this whole process of washing and drying takes less than ten minutes, which is an improvement on any patent soap-powder method, though it would be untrue to say that the clothes come out with the same dazzling whiteness. A few hundred yards from the river could be seen the village with its mosque built of sun-dried brick and its *sug* or market-place where one might find exposed for sale everything from dried dates to electric torches, and from soap (for which few seem to have much use) to murderous-looking swords and daggers. However, after an hour or so, all business completed, the steamer would back out into midstream, and the beat of its paddles soon lull us again to sleep as we lay in our deckchairs.

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123 By the end of the third day we began to look around us with a quickened interest, for we had entered the Upper Nile Province which to us was synonymous with the Apostolic Prefecture of Kodok. We already knew our destinations, for we had found letters awaiting us in Khartoum appointing three of us to stations in the territory of the Shilluk tribe and the fourth to Yoynyang on the Bahr-el-Gazal (Gazelle River) among the wild and woolly Nuer. I was destined for Detwok, and so the small hours of the next morning found me packed and ready for departure, since I

Where is Kodok?

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had been warned that the boat would arrive at Detwok about 3 a.m. At last I heard the raucous hoot which was so often to rouse me from my beauty sleep during the coming years; I bade a quick farewell to the other Fathers who had

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797 come on deck to see me leave, and together with my luggage
123 I was bundled into the steamer's boat, rowed to the bank,
carried through the deep mud on the shoulders of the boat-
man, and finally dumped on solid ground. Here I found
Monsignor Wall who, after visiting Detwok, was returning
123 to his headquarters at Malakal, and the Superior of the
Mission. Monsignor had just time for a word of welcome be-
fore he was carried to the boat I had just left and rowed across
to the steamer standing out in midstream. The Superior
and I turned, and by the dim light of a hurricane lamp
made our way through the dark tunnel which led to the
house. It was a ramp, half a mile long, built over the swamp
and bordered with trees; at every yard I shied fearfully at
writhing shapes across the path, only to gulp with relief on
finding that they were not the snakes I expected but the
roots of the trees. In the end there loomed up before us
the shadowy bulk of the house that was to be my home for
the next ten years. I had arrived.

CHAPTER II

THE PROMISED LAND

I AWOKE refreshed from sleep, and in the bright morning ⁷⁹⁷ ●
sunshine I was able to survey my new dwelling place. It was no Eden. In Africa there are many places of wonderful natural beauty, but Detwok is not one of them. Right in front of the house stood the ignoble remains of a brick kiln, and that together with the dried-up appearance of the soil gave one the impression of standing in a well-burnt brick-field. One looked ahead over an expanse of baked earth scarcely relieved by tufts of grass, yellow and shrivelled by the heat, and low clumps of thorn bushes and saw the river shining in the distance. To right and left of the house, indeed almost surrounding the compound in the rear, was a forest of vicious-looking thorn bush beyond which, half a mile away, could be seen the Shilluk villages thinly strung out in line, like, as one writer has put it, 'beads on a string'. [361]
In the compound itself were the Fathers' house, a substantial building just recently completed by the Italian Fathers with bricks burnt in the kiln whose ruins still remained, the Convent of the Sisters and a two-storey building with a school below and chapel above.

The scene was unlovely in the extreme. The earth of all ¹³⁴
that portion of the Upper Nile Province apart from the swamps is cotton soil, which, though eminently suitable for the growing of cotton, is useful for little else. In the dry season, lasting from November to June, its surface is rough and hard, broken by large cracks into which a bicycle wheel can easily slip as far as the hub; in the time of the rains it soon becomes a mass of grey viscous mud as unsafe for a careless walker as the surface of an ice rink. After a few weeks of heavy rain most of the countryside turns into a vast swamp through which one must wade knee-deep in water, [32]

134 struggling at each step to free oneself from the clinging mud underneath. Long after the rains have ceased the swamp remains, only drying up gradually under the heat of the sun and through drainage into the river, until by mid-December the moisture has all been drawn from the earth, and the bright green grass which has covered it during the rains begins to turn yellow and wither.

797 If my new home was no Eden of beauty, neither was it one free from labour and toil. The territory covered by the mission is, I discovered, quite large. In length it is about 70 miles, extending from Kaka, 55 miles to the north, to a point 15 miles south of Detwok; inland it stretches 15 miles

[361] from the river where the Shilluk villages farthest from the river are to be found. The 'parish' thus comprises roughly an area of 1,050 square miles and it is a formidable task for two priests to administer it, especially as the most speedy

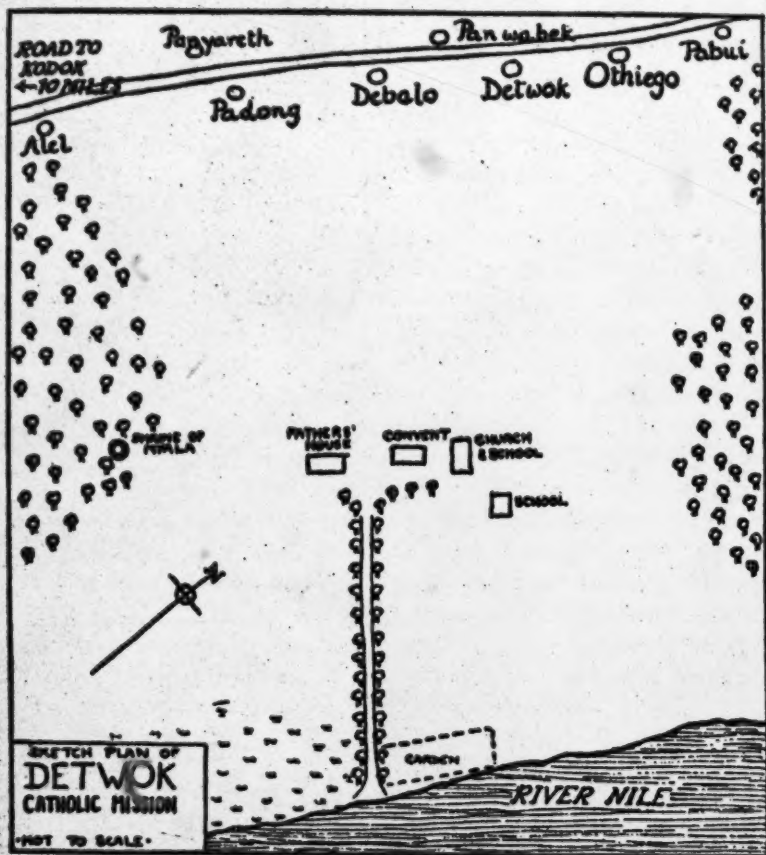
[493] means of transport available is the push bicycle. However, most of the Christians, who at that time were by no means [777] numerous, lived in the villages near the mission, and large areas were without habitation of any kind, so that the task of parochial visitation did not prove as onerous as it might at first appear. The Shilluk are inveterate wanderers and

[166] often drift from the villages in which they were born and baptized as far north as Kaka, or inland to the limits of inhabited country. There they will remain for years quite out of touch with the mission and Christian influence, for rarely if ever do they come in to hear Mass and receive the Sacraments. With all the good will in the world it is impossible for two priests, one with the many affairs of the mission to attend to and the other fully occupied in the school, to keep track of these nomads and follow them in their wanderings. But their heavenly mother, Mary, does not forget them at the hour of their death, and many is the time that

763 a message from a vigilant catechist, or word brought casually 797 by a passing traveller, or, more often than not, a request for a burial cloth from the pagan relatives of the dying Christian sends the priest post-haste a journey of 15 or 20 miles, in the dry season by bicycle, in the rains on foot, to bring the

The Promised Land

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last consolations of religion to these poor brethren of Christ.

After a month or so of my stay in Detwok I was happily settled in my new home, and was beginning to find my way about both in the district and—what was more difficult—in the Shilluk tongue. Although my activities were mainly confined to the classroom, occasionally I was able to escape from the trammels of schoolwork and spend a morning touring round some part of the mission. A morning of visiting

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123 would proceed somewhat in this fashion. I would plan an itinerary to take in half-a-dozen villages covering an area of two square miles or so, and from the mission books or my own notes decide on what had to be done. Augustine, living in Detwok, for example, had not sent in his pagan wife for instruction as he had promised; another gentle prodding would be necessary there. In Debalo I might find Julian, and it would be as well to investigate the report that he had begun negotiations for marriage with a pagan girl; I must find out how far matters have gone and how many head of cattle have been paid, and warn him to send the girl into the mission in good time so that she might be instructed and baptized and the marriage celebrated in church. Thomas in Pabiu has inherited his brother's wife, so I had better look him up and find out what he intends to do about it. And while I am there I shall make a point of calling to see old Rachael, a good woman who has been ill for a long time now; she has already received the last Sacraments and is waiting for our Lord to call her from this weary world, weary indeed for her for she is a leper and blind as well; a few cheerful words and the gift of a screw of tobacco will help to relieve the tedium of a long day. In Othicogo there is another sick woman whom I ought to visit; the Sisters have been taking care of her and instructing her, as she is a pagan; perhaps it might be prudent now to baptize her. Also there is that young villain Paul who ran away from school last week; his father must be persuaded to send him back again. And that reminds me that in the next village lives Frederick, who assured the Superior that he would send his children to school, but has not done so; he must be given a sharp reminder of the duties of Christian parents towards their children. My list of calls thus planned, I pack my sick-call case into the cycle bag, break off a few pieces of native grown tobacco from a lump like a brick, and just as hard and appetizing looking, and stuff them into my pocket, mount my cycle and bump off across country towards the main road and the line of villages.

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My entrance to the first village is greeted by a cacophony

The Promised Land

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of frenzied barking, as all the mongrels in the place, suddenly galvanized into life at the appearance of a stranger, give tongue to their displeasure and make a concerted rush with the evident intention of tearing me to pieces. I shout to one or two youths loitering near and ask them to call off the dogs, but to no avail, so I seize a stick and get in a telling smack or two on some which have ventured too near, and disperse the rest with a few well-aimed lumps of cotton soil. They retreat to a safe distance barking and growling threateningly, but at least I can make my way into the village in peace. There is little stir; a few men squat near the cow byre gossiping while one lies prostrate on the ground with the village hairdresser anointing his hair with a mixture of red mud, oil and ashes as a preparation for building it up into an elaborate coiffure. Most of the women have not yet returned from their daily trudge to the river for water, but the spirals of smoke rising from behind the reed fences which surround the individual homesteads indicate that some of the more industrious housewives have already begun to prepare the morning meal. A group of small children, pot-bellied and large-eyed, soon run to surround the Father and his bicycle; gravely they scrutinize him and his mount while some shyly offer him the customary Shilluk greeting, 'Yi bi—You have come'. The bolder spirits among them venture to come closer to investigate the wonder of his wrist watch, putting their ears against it to hear its ticking with smiles of amazement and delight.

The children follow the priest as he wheels his cycle across the open space to where the knot of idlers is sitting near the cattle byre. The village chief who is among them rises courteously to greet the white man; 'Jal duong,' he says, 'Yi nin: Great one, you have slept.' I answer him in accustomed fashion, 'Yi nut: You are here,' and then each man of the group greets me separately and receives his answer. I seat myself in the place of honour on the chief's mat and smoke a cigarette with him, discussing the prospects of the crops and making enquiries about certain ones in whom I am interested. Soon I excuse myself and go off in search of my

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123 errant sheep, Augustine, who has taken to himself a wife who is a pagan. Augustine is not to be found anywhere; no one knows when he went away, where he is, or when he is likely to return. I think it very probable that he saw me coming, and at present is hiding in a neighbouring hut, but I know that it is useless to press the matter further now, so making a mental note to come back after a day or two, I retrieve my cycle with a sigh and, waving farewell to the chief, make my way to the next village on my list. Here, my welcome from the dogs is as noisy as ever, but my visit more successful. Julian is at home and admits that he has begun to pay cattle for the lady of his choice, yet asserts loudly and with an air of injured innocence that he would not dream of marrying outside the Church, and that he has only to point out to the girl the error of her pagan ways for her to begin instruction in the mission. This I take with a grain of salt, for I have heard it all before and know from experience that it will take months of patient and persevering persuasion before the bride-to-be presents herself to the Sisters to commence the learning of the Catechism. Still I must be satisfied with Julian's assurance, and taking leave of him I pop in to see Rachael.

The poor old lady is lying on a skin on the ground, her emaciated body covered with a dirty cloth. She seems to be dead already, but at the sound of the priest's voice she stirs slightly and turns her sightless eyes in my direction. I can see that she has grown much weaker since last I saw her, and that it can only be a matter of days till she goes to her reward, so I give her another blessing for the good of her soul and close her skinny claws round a piece of tobacco. Poor Rachael is too far gone to use or appreciate such a luxury, but she realizes that some one has given her something and is comforted by the possession of it. She tucks her gift away among her rags, for she knows that if her harridan of a daughter sees it she will take it from her as soon as her visitor has departed.

The round of visits continues. Paul's father is surprised to learn that his truant son has not been in school for the past

The Promised Land

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week; he certainly has not been home, he says, and surmises that he has run off to the cattle camp across the river; he promises to investigate the matter in the morning, and the look in his eyes bodes no good for his errant offspring. In the case of the other missing schoolchildren I do not have the same success; Frederick is not at home, nor his boy; Cecilia, his wife, says that the lad is minding the sheep and goats and implies that he will have to go on minding them as there is no one else to do it. (The flock actually minds itself to the ruin of the Sisters' garden, while the false shepherd disports himself in the river.) As to little Amelia, she is wanted at home to look after the baby, so she can't come to school either. I give this up as a bad job and push on to work through the remainder of my visits. Once or twice I am called into a hut to look at someone who is sick, and if I judge that he or she is sufficiently ill to warrant the attention of the Sisters, I make a note of the name and place. In one hut I find a tiny baby obviously very ill, so while the mother anxiously looks on, I baptize it, giving it the name Angela. (I learned that evening from the Sisters that little Angela had died, and I felt happy that I had been instrumental in speeding her flight to join the angel choirs above.)

But now the last of the calls is made, and, accompanied by the ever unfriendly dogs, I make my exit from the village and take the track leading to the main road. In the distance I hear the mission bell ringing out the mid-day Angelus, and saluting the Mother of God as I ride, I quicken my speed towards the mission house and lunch.

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29:Dempsey M-5 (1940-1954) 1955

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The Consecration

Note the fashions in hair-dressing. The soup-plate style is achieved by letting the hair grow long and stiffening it with clay



By courtesy of V. Rev. J. P. Kennedy

The Communion

Note the hair-style affected by the chap nearest the camera: little balls of red clay give this charming effect

Detwok Mission: Mass at Dêtwok village (Celebrant, Rev. Fr. Rowlands)

[facing p. 20]

Shilluk Life

or Greek merchant and purchase one imported from England.

The most important and busiest months in the Shilluk year are those of the rainy season, from June to November. When the first rains fall, the villagers go out to prepare their fields for planting. The main plantations are generally at a considerable distance from the village, sometimes as much as ten miles inland; the small patches of maize and millet around the villages, usually cultivated by the women, are for a quick crop that can be used as soon as it is ripe. After the first few showers the grass is burnt and the ashes left to be washed into the soil. When enough rain has fallen to soften the ground, planting begins. There is no preliminary back-breaking hoeing or digging; the Shilluk would regard as crazy anyone who would suggest that such a thing was necessary or would improve the land. He would say that if the rains are good and all other circumstances favourable to growth, he will get enough grain to last him for the year, whereas if fortune is adverse, all the digging in the world will not fill his store basket. What was good enough for his fathers away back to the time of Nyikang is good enough for him; why should he try to improve on the wisdom of the ancients? If this particular patch was sufficient for his father and his father's father, why should he go to the trouble of clearing another? One of the Fathers in Lul, an expert and enthusiastic farmer, tried to convert the schoolboys to a better system of farming by showing them the benefits of digging and manuring the land. He divided an area of ground into two equal parts, planting one half according to the Shilluk and the other according to his own improved method; yet even the sight of the bumper crop that he obtained failed to impress the boys: it was not the Shilluk way of doing things and therefore not for them. And so, the husbandman with a sharp pointed stick removes a small divot from the unbroken surface, drops in a few millet seeds and pushes back the soil with his heel as he moves on. When the whole field has been sown in this manner, he is content to sit back and leave the rest to the beneficence of Nyikang,

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226 with their harpoons and spears and driving the fish before them. The fish that escape the spears and are caught in the nets are collected, and the operation is repeated again and again until the late afternoon when either the fishing or the fishermen are exhausted and the party returns laden with the burden of the catch. It sometimes happens that the fishing is not successful, and the fishermen return with a very poor load, or even nothing at all. Once I met such a party coming back dejected from a full day's fruitless toil; all that they had to show as the result of eight hours' strenuous work in the sun was a large rat dangling from the end of a spear. On another occasion the fishing had hardly begun in earnest before one of the men was seized by a large crocodile. I am sorry to say that his companions in their panic ran off and left him to his fate, but he attacked the brute with his spear and managed to free himself. Needless to say, the fishing was abandoned for that day. The Sisters nursed the victim, whose thigh was badly lacerated, and after some months, thanks to their care, he recovered completely. When these communal fishing expeditions take place, the school might [872] as well be closed for all the learning that is done. It is just as impossible to keep the boys to their lessons, as it would be to keep a class of English boys if a cup-tie were being played on the school football field. So when the vanguard of the fishing party passes the school, we call it a day and send the pupils off. If the results are good, there are empty places in the classroom for many days afterwards, for the boys who live locally stay at home as long as the good living lasts.

224 For the Shilluk youth who finds community fishing a dull affair, in spite of the dangers of being seized by a crocodile or being harpooned by an over-excited companion, there are always the hazards and profits of hunting hippopotamus. The hippo which are so numerous in the Nile, and particularly in the Bahr-el-Gazal, are strictly royal game. The Shilluk may hunt if they wish, but a large portion of the carcase must be sent to the king in Fashoda, and a hunter who refused to do this, or tried to conceal his 'bag', would

175 take control of the government of his own country, the new
 648 Sudan Government took immediate steps to bring education
 to an almost entirely illiterate people. Less than four years
 after the Battle of Omdurman, the Gordon Memorial
 College was opened by Lord Kitchener in the newly-built
 Khartoum as the nucleus of educational development in the
 Sudan. Elementary schools were opened to bring the rudiments
 [871] of education to the peasantry and later, as the need
 arose, intermediate schools, a technical school and a teacher
 training college. As the number of literates grew, other
 departments acquired their own training establishments.
 The Kitchener School of Medicine and the Lee Stack
 Laboratories provided for the training of Sudanese doctors,
 chemists and dispensers; the Atbara Railways School gave
 the young Sudanese the opportunity to take control of the
 railway system which covers the northern part of the country
 [505] and of the fleet of steamers which operates on the Nile south
 of Khartoum. In the Law Courts Sudanese advocates plead
 their causes before Sudanese judges and magistrates who
 have been trained in the School of Law. The Agricultural
 and Veterinary branches have their own training establish-
 ments, many of the senior police and army officers are
 Sudanese, and the training of officers in the political and
 administrative departments is so far advanced that Sudanese
 District Commissioners and Assistant District Commissioners
 are now common, and several have been promoted as
 Deputy-Governors of Provinces.*

648 For some twenty-five years official educational efforts
 871 were confined almost exclusively to the peoples of the north.
 797 In the south missionary bodies, both Catholic and Protestant,
 without Government aid or recognition, laboured untiringly
 among the primitive peoples in their efforts to give them
 some share at least of the educational benefits enjoyed by
 their more fortunate brethren in the north. Only in 1946
 was Government aid given in small measure to help to defray

* Since this was written all British officials have retired, and except for the Governor-Generalate, Sudanese have taken charge in all departments.

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the educational expenditure that hitherto the missionaries had met from their own meagre resources, and it is only during the past decade that official steps have been taken to promote higher education in the south and to assist the missionary organizations in a way commensurate with their labours in the field of education. It must be stated, however, that plans for the development of education in the south were in hand in 1938, but the outbreak of war prevented their being implemented. During the years in which the Sudanese were educationally being reared from childhood to adolescence, and from adolescence to manhood, the administration and development of their country was in the hands of experts from outside, generally from Britain, which country too, in the beginning, provided the financial assistance necessary to launch the various schemes which such wholesale development entailed. British doctors inaugurated and took control of the public health of the country and gradually established large, well-equipped hospitals throughout the land; in keeping with the number of trained Sudanese doctors, dispensers and medical assistants, dispensaries were opened in more remote districts and administered from each hospital. Engineers developed the railway which the army had laid down to assist Kitchener's campaign against the Mahdists and extended it to cater for the northern half of the country, and for the south built and launched the first passenger and cargo vessels which have grown into the large fleet of steamers which today provide the main passenger and commercial link between the Sudan and the other countries of Central Africa. The Forestry and Veterinary services took in hand the conservation and the improvement both numerically and in quality of two of the country's most valuable assets, her trees and her cattle. Yet the Sudan could not continue indefinitely to depend upon outside gifts and loans to finance her public services. Some way had to be found to provide a regular national income large enough to enable the country to pay her way, and since the Sudan is essentially an agricultural and pastoral country it was on these lines that the problem had to be solved. The

643 himself a worthy successor of his great ancestor; Nyikang
796 reappears and goes back to his shrine where he remains until he returns to Akurua.

The concluding ceremonies take place the following day when the chiefs from all over the country gather to do fealty to their new king. The king, seated on the sacred stool of Nyikang, faces the assembled chiefs. Each one comes forward [537] in turn carrying a spear. He makes a speech of praise and exhortation, and at the conclusion drives his spear into the ground to signify that he will never raise it against the king. The king replies briefly to the gathering, thanking the chiefs for their protestations of loyalty and promising to rule justly. [782] After the assembly a bull is sacrificed, and the reth makes a tour of inspection of Fashoda. He pauses outside his father's house, a sheep is stretched out before the threshold, he steps over it and disappears into the interior. He has come into his own.

All over the country there is a general feeling of buoyancy and relief. The shadow is lifted from the land. Nyikang is among his people again . . . long live the king!

643 Perhaps I may be pardoned if to this account of the posi-
797 tion, the installation and death of the reth, I add a few words on the death of one of the recent kings, Papiti, because of the interest it has for our mission and its work. Papiti must be one of the longest lived of Shilluk kings. The twenty-ninth in succession from Nyikang, he was the son of Yor who had been hanged by the Mahdists in Kodok. He was elected king in 1917, and died in 1943; thus his reign extended over a period of twenty-six years.

[798] From the time of the accession of King Papiti dates the prosperity of the Catholic missions in the Shilluk country, or at least dates the time when they ceased to suffer persecution at the hands of the Shilluk and were permitted to live and do their work in peace, for Papiti had always shown himself a firm friend of the missionaries. He was a frequent visitor to the mission at Lul and often sent presents of hippopotamus fat, a rare delicacy, and butter. It was his authority and good

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sense that saved the struggling mission of Detwok from destruction at the hands of the grief-stricken and enraged villagers when in 1931 the wall of a brick kiln collapsed, killing several boys and girls. He had on several occasions expressed his wish to become a Christian but owing to the political and religious repercussions that would have followed had he, the ruler and high priest of the Shilluk, taken such a step whilst in the prime of life, he had perforce to defer his conversion, but hoped for the grace of baptism before he died. God granted him his desire.

King Papiti became ill in mid-September, 1943. He had indeed been unwell for some time, but was afraid to let it be known to anybody in case the news brought the traditional smotherers to his hut. (On a similar occasion some years before he had had to spend lonely nights in the forest, in fear of his life, until he had recovered from his illness.) Now it was too late for medical skill to do anything for him and he was dying.

We heard the news in Detwok from Eugene, his nephew, one of our best Christians and a catechist. He proposed to go to Fashoda to ask the king if he had meant what he said about becoming a Christian. Being so close a relative of Papiti's and yet having no claim to the throne, Eugene would easily be admitted to his presence. He set off through the swamps and the mud (it was in the middle of the rains) to cover the twenty miles to Fashoda. On arrival there he was eagerly welcomed by Papiti who reiterated his desire for baptism. Eugene therefore gave him some preliminary instruction and without further delay continued as fast as the conditions of the terrain would permit, to Lul, some twelve miles further south. He arrived at the mission in the early hours of the morning and at once aroused Fr. Hurst from his bed. But let Fr. Hurst himself proceed with the narrative:

In the Shilluk country there are no papers, but news travels fast nevertheless, and we heard that the king was sick. On Saturday, September 18th, at 4.30 a.m. I was

- 643 awakened by a man calling out at my door; very sleepily
 797 I asked what was the matter and he replied, 'The king is
 sick and is calling for the Father to come to him.' The
 man who called me was a nephew of the king and had
 already given the king some instruction in the Faith as he
 was well able to do—he is a catechist in our Detwok
 mission. I first said Mass and after some breakfast set out
 for Fashoda, a distance of some twelve miles. I was accom-
 panied by the catechist and the local medical dispenser
 who was also a Catholic. I had to walk, for the swamps
 were full and the grass was very high. There was not a
 breath of wind. Indeed it was a pleasure to wade through
 the swamps for the cool water was very refreshing to tired
 and hot feet. We pushed on fast and made only one stop
 of about five minutes, whilst my escort had a drink. I
 was offered milk, but as unboiled milk is very dangerous
 in this country, I refused. When we arrived at Fashoda
 the whole place had the silence of a sick room, no dogs
 [195] barked and all the people spoke in whispers as is the
 custom in Fashoda. I was taken at once to the king's
 [614] dwelling, which is just the same as any other Shilluk
 house, except that more care had been taken over its
 construction. In the house were four women fanning the
 [237] king with the wings of a saddle-billed stork and the eldest
 son of Papiti was there too. As soon as I entered the hut,
 the king sat up and greeted me; he was lying on the
 [513] floor just like any other Shilluk, but he had a thin mattress
 on top of the usual cow-hide. He seemed very pleased to
 see me and at once told the women to leave the hut and
 I began the instruction. My task was easy for he knew
 Catholic doctrine and believed it; he knew all the obliga-
 tions of the Faith. When I put the question to him about
 his wives he said, 'Father, my soul is the main thing now,'
 and before witnesses he gave me his promise to be a man
 of one wife. I baptised him 'Joseph' after our Patron, and
 it was also the feast day of St. Joseph of Cupertino. He
 received baptism with great devotion and gave me the
 impression of understanding to the full the meaning of the

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Sacrament he was receiving. He was not unmindful of my needs and sent word that food was to be prepared for me. I was taken into another house—a very special one into which few but the king and his queens enter. A woman brought me a skin to sit on and then, on her two knees, presented me with roasted maize cobs and native beer. I was in very great need of a drink for though we had waded through lots of water we could not drink it; if we did, dysentery was sure. This special house contained a very fine collection of animal skins and also the spear of Nyikang, a thing most sacred to the Shilluk. There also was a stick on which were recorded the years of the king's reign. I was sent a wing of a saddle-billed stork to use as a fan and these are, as a rule, reserved to the king himself.

At two in the afternoon I said good-bye to the king who made me a further present of a goat, and I set out for home. King Joseph, as he was now, had very thoughtfully ordered an ambach canoe to be brought so that I could cross a very deep swamp on a path that made our journey much shorter. I was feeling very tired, and every mile my feet felt like lumps of lead—the last mile seemed very long. But I arrived home about five o'clock and I announced in church the good news that the king was baptized and all the Catholics of the mission rejoiced. There were no hostile remarks from pagans that I ever heard of. King Joseph, formerly Papiti, died on September 22nd.

By King Papiti's express wish the customary temporary interment was not proceeded with, and on the night of the day following his death, he was taken to his own village of Pareth Papiti (Village of King Papiti) and there buried. The traditional funeral dances were held in his honour, but took place much earlier than usual, only about six weeks after his death.

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occasional outbreaks of fighting. An incident which might have had serious consequences occurred in 1940, shortly after I had arrived at Detwok. The young bloods of Detwok, after a merry evening of drinking and dancing, thought to round off a perfect day with a raid on the ladies of Pabiu. All good fun and high spirits, but the men of Pabiu, not unnaturally, objected to their daughters and sisters being taken for a midnight stroll, and the father of one girl stabbed her aggressor in the throat. The attackers, suddenly sobered by this serious end to their pranks, retreated to their own village, carrying their wounded companion. The drum was sounded, the village roused and the men armed themselves for the raid that Pabiu might make on them for the insult offered to its womenfolk, or for the attack that they would most surely launch on Pabiu should the wounded man die. Fortunately tragedy was averted by the good sense of the chief of Detwok. Knowing that he would be unable to restrain his angry subordinates if the man did die, he sent a runner to the mission for medical assistance and another to Kodok for the police. Mother R. immediately went to Detwok and by prompt first aid saved the wounded warrior's life and the two villages a great amount of extra trouble and grief. The arrival of the police in the morning and the removal of the originators of the mischief restored peace, at least temporarily, to the neighbourhood.

Later the same year, the Assistant District Commissioner chanced to drop in at Detwok. His visit was most unfortunate from the village's point of view, for he found a couple of Sudanese witch doctors plying a brisk trade with, not merely the connivance, but the positive approval of the chief. He and the medicine men were promptly arrested and he was deposed from his chieftainship. He had been not merely chief of Detwok but the District chief, and now, to the chagrin of all true Detwokians, that coveted honour was transferred to Pabiu.

The year 1943 gave Detwok fresh cause for resentment and a fresh longing for revenge over their hated rivals. The rains had failed and the mid-year food shortage was even

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in an ajwogo to cure her. He diagnosed her illness, which actually was pneumonia, as an evil spirit inside her, and proceeded to release it by gouging a hole in her side with a broken and rusty scissors blade. It was due only to the care that the poor girl received from the indignant nuns that she was saved at all, and fully two months after her 'operation' she had not completely recovered the use of her limbs, and was reduced to crawling round the village on her hands and knees. 756 755

Fortunately, the people are coming to realize the good that proper medical treatment can do them. They are more willing to send to the local medical dispensary for assistance and, if necessary, to allow the Medical Assistant or us at the mission to send their sick into Malakal hospital. On this account the influence of the ajwogo as a general practitioner is being weakened and it will be greatly to the benefit of the Shilluk when it is destroyed altogether. 757 756 177

The other disciple of Nyikang, the jal yath, is a dabbler in black magic, a worker of evil. For a fee, he will undertake to bring about the death or the illness of an enemy, or an injury to his crops or cattle. Often enough the evil effects he does cause will be brought about by the old-fashioned method of poison, but to impress his client he will have recourse to the childish practice of making an image of the intended victim and sticking nails in it to demonstrate the pains he is to suffer, or causing it to waste away, when the sufferer's body will waste in a similar manner. The jal yath is undoubtedly greatly feared by the people and plays upon their fears to achieve his end. An instance of this occurred at Detwok some years ago. We employ a number of youths at the mission as gardeners, cowherds, kitchen and table boys, etc. One of this little community, the gardener, was the proud possessor of a wooden box in which he could keep his few possessions under lock and key. Since he was the only one thus blessed, the other boys used to entrust their savings to him, each keeping his modest sum, ranging from a few piastres to a pound or so, in a tobacco tin in the wooden box. One day it was discovered that the box had been opened 754 278 685 754 797 464 454

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until at least seven cows have been paid. When that number ⁵⁸³ has been safely gathered into the family byre, the love-lorn swain may indeed claim his blushing bride, but if after that the payment of the remainder be unduly delayed, the indignant father and the male relatives of the lady will not hesitate to carry her off to her former home till what time the final instalments are forthcoming, or even, if there is little or no prospect of the debt being speedily paid, of offering her anew to one more likely to fulfil his obligations.

But even when the last cow has been handed over; when ⁵⁸³ the somewhat bewildered ox, garlanded and decorated, has ⁵⁸⁵ been escorted to the bride's village by a cheering and singing mob of the bridegroom's friends; when the mock battle has taken place during which the bride's party endeavours to and eventually succeeds in wresting the cow from the hands of the groom's partisans; when they in turn have stormed the paternal stronghold, and carrying off the lady have delivered her into the arms of her ever-loving husband; when the last dance has been danced and the final bumper quaffed, still the young husband's bovine anxieties are not completely at rest. A murrain might sweep the land and ⁵⁸³ claim one or more of his cattle among its victims, and the ⁵⁸⁶ law demands that they be replaced, or else he may find ⁶⁸⁶ himself a grass widower. And if perchance the replacements should die, then others must be forthcoming within a reasonable period of time, that the total may be kept complete. Failure to comply with these demands may mean that the District Chief may order that the unhappy man's wife and children 'be sold and payment be made'. This quite literally happened at Detwok; a man had been married for ten years and had three children; he had paid only seven head of cattle and of these three had died, so that he still owed six. His family was taken from him and given to another man who was able to pay the required cattle. Fortunately, in this case the mission was able to step in. It was a Christian ⁷⁹⁷ family and the marriage had been solemnized in church according to the requirements of both God and the Government. The priest told the chief that he could not ruthlessly

583 break up a Christian family in that manner, and that if the
 586 woman and children were not returned to their home within
 686 three days, the matter would be taken to the king. Happily
 ● 797 we were on safe ground in threatening this. A short time
 before there had been a similar case in Lul where a Christian
 family was concerned and the Fathers had protested suc-
 cessfully to the king, who ordered the family to be returned.
 The chief, hearing this, gave in gracefully and the woman and
 children were brought back.

583 And what of the happy father of the bride? Does he
 602 assume the airs and authority of a cattle baron at thus being
 enriched by ten cows? Poor old father, alas, will be fortunate
 if he gets one or two of the dowry to call his own. He
 does, indeed, as befitting his dignity as head of the family,
 receive the cattle, but the same family will take very good
 care that they do not remain long in the paternal shippon.
 He probably has growing sons hungry for cattle to build up
 their own dowries, but if it should happen that the Lord has
 not blessed him with male issue, his own unmarried brothers
 will clamour for their share; his wife's strident voice will be
 heard advancing the claims of her brothers; uncles and
 nephews and in-laws will take up the cry, some in strong,
 others in less certain terms according to their proximity to
 or remoteness from the immediate family circle, and the
 dispute will continue until the final settlement is made and
 the cows are dispersed to the remotest parts of the land. One
 thing is sure, and that is that if anyone suffers from the
 division of the spoils it will be father. In the course of a
 231 few years the cattle of a dowry will have changed hands
 several times, having been split up and absorbed into other
 herds, again and again handed over as part of a bride-price,
 and again and again finding new owners among some girl's
 relatives, ranging the length and breadth of the Shilluk
 country and back again, shifting and changing, being
 collected and dispersed, only to be collected and dispersed
 again. And so it will go on until an individual cow is deemed
 no longer worthy of inclusion in a dowry, when it will be
 sold for butcher's meat or slaughtered for a wedding or a

586 she would be ignominiously bundled off home. The husband, like an indignant customer who has made an unsatisfactory purchase, would demand his dowry back. The girl's family would strenuously resist the claim and a long and acrimonious dispute would follow. The husband might attempt to recover his cattle by force, and eventually the case would be settled by the Reth's court; a compromise would be reached, judgment would be given for the plaintiff, but one or two cows would remain with the girl's family, and so would the unfortunate girl herself. Similarly, should the young bride die childless, the contract is deemed not to have been fulfilled, and the husband will demand that the bride wealth be returned to him. If the lady, faithless jade, should leave her lawful spouse for another man, the outraged husband does not leap up in righteous anger, seize his spear, pursue the erring couple and demand satisfaction of the seducer of his wife's affections, but he does make a bee-line for his father-in-law's kraal, and in the height of his wrath will demand not only the cattle, but also the sheep, spears and hoes and all the other little trinkets and knick-knacks with which he won the family's good graces during time of courtship. Father, anxious to keep the peace and the cattle, may offer his irate son-in-law another charming daughter, if he has one handy, as a substitute for the fickle one. But if such a useful article as a second daughter of marriageable age is lacking, or the husband, feeling that his matrimonial adventures in that particular family have gone far enough, should refuse the hand of the second lady, then father with a sigh will have to set about the difficult task of making his reluctant relatives give up their respective shares of the dowry and, at the same time, the equally difficult task of getting another dowry from his new son-in-law.

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In Detwok a boy was being examined in the Catechism prior to his baptism. The subject under discussion was the Sacraments and their division into those which may be received only once and those which may be repeated. All went well until the subject of Matrimony was reached. 'How often can a person receive the Sacrament of Matri-

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mony?' asked the priest. 'Once,' promptly answered the catechumen, and then cautiously amended his answer, 'perhaps twice.' 'Oh,' said the Father, 'why only twice?' 'If a man marries and his wife dies, he can marry again, can't he?' 'Ye-es,' conceded the boy, 'he can marry again.' 'And if that second wife dies,' continued the Father, 'can't he marry a third time?' 'No,' said the boy. 'Why not?' 'Because he has no cows left' was the triumphant and conclusive reply. And that fairly well sums up the Shilluk's attitude towards matrimony. In common with the rest of his African brethren he is by inclination polygamous. In Africa nothing adds more to one's prestige than a multiplicity of wives. Fortunately, however, from our—the Catholic missionaries'—standpoint the tribe as a whole is of necessity monogamous. Except in the case of wealthy chiefs or fathers who rejoice in a quiverful of daughters to bring cattle into the family byre and no sons to take them out, the people generally are too poor to be able to scrape together the necessary cattle to provide for a second wife.

When a man dies his wife is not thereby released from her matrimonial obligations and free either to re-marry or to remain a widow. She is, as has been said, something that has been bought and paid for, part of the dead man's property, and is inherited together with the rest of his effects. If she is not the mother of the deceased's eldest son he will claim her, or if she is his mother or there is no son, or none old enough to marry, she will be taken by her brother-in-law or some other member of her husband's family. She belongs to that family and must remain in it to fulfil her duties as a wife and a mother to some member of it. If it so happened that there were no relative, no matter how remote, of her husband who could inherit her, then she might marry again outside it, but only on condition that a dowry is forthcoming to compensate her husband's family.

A death among the Shilluk is the signal for an outburst of wailing on the part of the women. It is a high, shrill, screaming

731 widespread, few have a sufficiency and fewer have any to spare for sale. Then the plight of the Shilluk is pitiful indeed.

Such a disaster occurred in 1945. The rains were sparse all over the country and failed almost entirely in the Upper Nile Province. In the Detwok area, after a promising start a prolonged drought set in and the young shoots withered and died. Hope revived when a heavy downpour of rain broke the drought and the people went out to plant again. But this second planting suffered the same fate as the first and as one scorching day followed another during the remainder of what was supposed to be the rainy season expectation slowly died, together with the wilting crops. The ruin was complete and, as we soon learned, was confined not merely to our own area or even to the Upper Nile but was general throughout the country.

- 797 In Detwok we were planning to open a Central School the following year and consequently had in hand a larger building programme than usual. The famine assured us of no scarcity of labour. Usually even though the crops are meagre there is no shortage in the months immediately following the harvest, and the Shilluk, careless for the future, gives himself over to the enjoyment of the fruits of his industry. Much of his precious grain is converted into beer and he dispenses and receives lavish hospitality at the many village dances with which the Shilluk celebrates the harvest.
- [574] Not unnaturally the proposal that he should spend the next few months digging foundations or brickmaking or carrying water is received with a marked lack of enthusiasm, and we usually depend for our labour upon those improvident bachelors who have not bothered about a cultivation and who moreover are faced with the necessity of raising money to pay the annual poll tax.
- [535]

731 This year, however, there was no need to be anxious about a shortage of workmen. Each Monday when the labourers were hired for the week the mission was besieged from before dawn by hundreds of men and women begging for a chance to be able to earn a few shillings. We were able to employ only a fraction of this crowd, and it was a thankless and an

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unhappy task to try to choose fairly so that, if not every individual, at least every village should be given a turn. It was an even more difficult and unhappy task to send the disappointed ones away; to turn a deaf ear to their pleadings; to close one's eyes to the mute appeal in theirs. 731 797 466

But in actual fact the ones who worked were little better off than those who didn't, for although they had a little money there was no grain to buy. In view of the opening of the new school we had been forming a reserve of grain, but the scheme had to be abandoned in the face of such complete shortage. We doled out what we had and by dint of careful and stringent rationing we were able to keep about twenty families, I will not say 'fed', but at least from starvation from October until February when our store was exhausted and we could do no more.

The Government stepped in and took control of all the grain in the country in order to ensure a fair distribution. We had at that time about 120 people—schoolchildren and permanent employees—to feed every day, and normally used a 2-cwt sack of grain per day. We were allotted ten sacks per month, one third of our usual consumption, and so had to make a proportionate reduction in the food bowl. But there was no question of the Shilluk schoolboy being thankful for small mercies in receiving a little every day whilst his less fortunate parents and brothers and sisters at home got nothing. There were protest meetings among the boys generally followed by an indignant procession carrying the meagrely filled bowls so that the Father—myself—who in their eyes was responsible for this shortage could see for himself the result of his gross neglect in not cornering the entire grain supply for their benefit. In vain I pointed out that the famine was no fault of mine and that they were better off than their brethren in the village. They replied in effect that such arguments were beside the point. Since they had done me the favour of coming to the mission to be fed, clothed, housed—and incidentally taught—for nothing, the least I could do in return was to see that the feeding was adequate, and since I had so obviously failed in this respect,

73/ they might as well go home again. And go home many of
797 them did, regardless of the fact that whilst at the mission
● they would get some sort of a daily ration, there would be
nothing for them at the parental board, not even a welcome.

Those who remained got a little extra in consequence of the defection of their fellows, and in order to supplement their slim diet still more I divided the school into two and on alternate days sent one half to fish for the benefit of everybody whilst the other half had class, and bought a bull each week to provide them with a couple of meat meals.

And so we struggled on from month to month until in June the importation of beans from Egypt eased matters considerably, and eventually with the arrival of the new crops in mid-September the crisis was passed.

73/ The unfortunate people outside the mission did not fare so well. True, periodic allotments of grain were made at various central villages that boasted a shop or two, but it was impossible to devise an equitable system of rationing, and since many people were several miles from these centres, the possession of money did not guarantee that there would be grain left by the time they had tramped the hot and dusty road to the shop. For the most part they subsisted on roots
[261] and grass and occasionally a decent catch of fish would enable them to forget their misery for a time.

We heard of many instances of suffering and endurance during these dreadful months; how a young mother alone in a hut with her newly-born baby, in trying to lift herself up to reach for a drink of water fell on the infant and killed it; how a woman in search of food walked from Detwok through the Shilluk country to Kaka some fifty miles to the north, there crossed the river and continued her quest among the equally stricken Dinka tribe, and making a huge semi-circle through rough country, eventually recrossed the Nile opposite Detwok and came home empty-handed, having covered about 150 miles on foot.

73/ One morning when I was going across to the school I saw
797 two little children in the Sisters' compound trying to pick out the few grains of millet seed that had fallen into the

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cracks in the soil. As I approached they fled and I continued with a heavy heart across the compound. The Reverend Mother came from the house to meet me. The tears were streaming down her face as she told me that the two children had been abandoned by their parents who had gone away in search of food. Near to tears myself I told the weeping nun that I could not and would not take any more children into the school, that I could not and would not feed all the destitute children from the villages and that I could not permit her to give of our scanty ration to any of the hungry folk that daily haunted the mission. But, I hastily added, as the tears flowed faster, if she was a wicked and disobedient nun and chose when I was safely out of the way to disregard these strict orders and give a little food occasionally to two small hungry children, then of course I could not prevent her from doing so. It took her a moment to grasp my meaning, and then brightening, she dried her eyes and cheerfully promised to disobey me each morning when I was in the classroom and unable to see what was going on. And so the two children were given a meal every day while the shortage lasted and until their parents returned to provide for them.

The rains of 1946 bade fair to make amends for their sad failure of the previous year. And that the heavy downpours we experienced in Detwok were no mere local affairs was soon made evident from the rapidity with which the Nile rose. The mission is half a mile from the river and is reached by a road built some four feet above the swamp level and lined with trees by our energetic Italian predecessors. By the end of September the swamp waters had overtopped the road and had flooded it in parts to a depth of nearly a foot, and by Christmas the accepted method of going to collect mails and stores from the fortnightly steamer was to paddle the mission boat down the road until it grounded in the mud and then to wade the rest—and this generally at about 2 a.m.

During this time Mgr. Wall, the Prefect, paid one of his periodic visits to the mission. He did not travel on the ordinary fortnightly boat but by a casual northbound tug,

29:Dempsey M-5 (1940-1954) 1955

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so that his arrival was unawaited. As usual the boat arrived at Detwok in the small hours of the morning, and after manœuvring round in the inky darkness managed to put Monsignor ashore on what was thought to be the road, but which turned out to be the garden. Since this was locked he could not get out, so the tugmaster obligingly took him on board again and then backing his craft a few yards down to where the path was, told a couple of sailors to carry Monsignor ashore and escort him up to the mission. They managed to land him without mishap on the only piece of dry land that remained—a patch about the size of a tablecloth—but after splashing a few yards through the watery waste the boatmen prudently refused to proceed further and lifted Monsignor up to carry him back to the tug. Unfortunately they dropped him in the river. However, he was quickly fished out, and spent the rest of the night in a chair, in pyjamas and dressing-gown, while his sodden garments dried out in the engine-room.

On another occasion the unfortunate Father whose duty it was to attend to whatever boats should call at the mission was aroused from his slumbers by a mournful hoot from the river which heralded the arrival of a steamer. Reluctantly dragging himself from his snug bed he went out on the verandah and to his relief saw the lights of the boat receding in the distance. He decided that either the hooter had blown in mistake or else whatever had been dumped on the bank could wait until morning. 'Whatever had been dumped on the bank' did wait until morning; it was Mgr. Wall once more, making another unexpected visit to the mission. Finding no guide coming to assist him and not daring in the dark to attempt the perilous passage of the waters alone, he was marooned and had perforce to await the coming of daylight, sitting on his suitcase and wrapped in his dressing-gown for protection against the hordes of mosquitoes that delightedly hastened to the place to keep him company during the long hours of his vigil.

When at length the river began to subside the floods receded rapidly, so rapidly indeed that they carried away a

29: Dempsey M-5 (1940-1954) 1955
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Photo: Fr. P. Spalander

Right Reverend Monsignor Hart, Prefect Apostolic of Malakal (formerly Kodok) Prefecture and some of the Fathers

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great portion of the road and of the embankment that we had repaired and built up at no inconsiderable cost and labour only the previous year. 731 797

So passed our trial by famine and flood. We have been visited by both misfortunes since then but not again in successive years nor on so large and widespread a scale.